

Asthma Briefing Document
Presented to the Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities
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Asthma is a chronic inflammatory disorder of the airways that makes it hard to breathe. Breathing becomes difficult because the airways tighten, thicken, become inflamed, and fill with mucus. Symptoms of asthma can include wheezing, shortness of breath, chest tightness, and cough.

CRITERION #1: PREVALENCE / INCIDENCE

- The prevalence of current asthma among Washington adults has increased from 7.0% in 1999 to 9.5% in 2005, an increase of 36%. There were an estimated 416,100 adults with asthma in 2005.
- In 2004, 8.7% of Washington youth (6th - 12th graders) reported having current asthma.
- The proportion of Washington adults reporting that at least one child in their household currently had asthma increased from 10.0% in 1999 to 11.5% in 2003.
- The prevalence of asthma is greater in Washington than it is nationally, and has been reported as one of the highest in the nation.

CRITERION #2: SEVERITY

- Deaths from asthma are rare, affecting about 86 Washington residents per year. The asthma death rate declined from 1.9 to 1.4 deaths per 100,000 from 1990 to 2001 and has remained stable since then.
- Between 2000 and 2004, there were about 5,200 hospitalizations for asthma each year.
- In 2002, the estimated costs for medical care due to asthma were almost \$240 million.
- Adults and youth with asthma report having symptoms frequently, often have trouble sleeping, and miss work and school.

CRITERION #3: DISPARITY

- For 2003-2005, asthma prevalence among Washington adults by race and ethnicity was as follows: Native Americans (14%), blacks (11%), non-Hispanic whites (9%), Asians and Pacific Islanders (7%), and Hispanics (7%); for an Index of Disparity of 47%.
- For 2002 and 2004 combined, asthma prevalence among youth was as follows: blacks (10.6%), Native Americans (9.8%), non-Hispanic whites (9.2%), Pacific Islanders (8.0%), Asians (5.9%) and Hispanics (5.8%); with an Index of Disparity of 50.0%.
- Asthma death rates for 1992-2001 combined were significantly higher among blacks (3.6 per 100,000), Native Americans (3.1 per 100,000) and Asians/Pacific Islanders (2.6 per 100,000) than for whites (1.8 per 100,000). Hispanics had a death rate of 1.3%. The Index of Disparity for asthma mortality rates was 113.5%.
- Wide variations exist for Hispanic subgroups, with higher prevalence found among Puerto Ricans. Washington's Hispanic population originates largely from Mexico.
- Among young children, asthma prevalence is higher for boys than girls. By high school and through adulthood these differences reverse and women have higher prevalence than men. From 2003-2005, the prevalence among women (11%) was nearly twice that of men (7%).

The Index of Disparity is the average of the difference in rates between the racial/ethnic group with the "best" rate and all other racial/ethnic groups.

Keppel KG et al., Measuring progress in healthy people 2010. Statistical Notes, no 25. NCHS, 2004

Sources: (1) Dilley JA, Pizacani BP, Macdonald SM, Bardin J. The Burden of Asthma in Washington State. Washington State Department of Health. Olympia, WA. June 2005. DOH Pub No. 345-201. (2) Preliminary data from: Washington State Department of Health (2007). Health of Washington State. 2007. Olympia, WA. *In press.*